

JOEL

INTRODUCTION

The prophecy of Joel may seem unimportant as it contains only three brief chapters. However, this little book is like an atom bomb -- it is not very big, but it sure is potent and powerful.

We know very little about the prophet Joel. All we are told concerning him is in [Joel 1:1](#), "The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel." Joel means "Jehovah is God," and it was a very common name. There have been some people who have jumped to the conclusion that the prophet Joel was a son of Samuel because [1Samuel 8:1-2](#) says, "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel . . ." But if we read further the next verse tells us, "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" ([1Sam. 8:3](#)). Samuel's son could not have been the same as the prophet Joel.

We can be sure that Joel prophesied in Jerusalem and the Jerusalem area. Throughout his prophecy he refers again and again to "the house of the LORD." For instance, in [Joel 1:9](#) we read, "The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn." He also mentions Jerusalem in [Joel 3:20](#), "But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation." And then again, in [Joel 3:17](#), we read, "So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." Therefore we know that this man was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Joel prophesied as one of the early prophets. Actually there were quite a few prophets -- at least fifty -- and it is generally conceded by conservative scholars that Joel prophesied about the time of the reign of Joash, king of Judah. That would mean that he was contemporary with and probably knew Elijah and Elisha.

Joel's theme is "the day of the LORD." He makes specific reference to it five times: [Joel 1:15](#); [Joel 2:1-2](#); [Joel 2:10-11](#); [Joel 2:30-31](#); and [Joel 3:14-16](#). Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel all refer to the Day of the Lord. Sometimes they call it "that day." Zechariah particularly emphasizes "that day." What is "that day"? It is the Day of the Lord, or the Day of Jehovah. Joel is the one who introduces the Day of the Lord in prophecy. Yonder from the mountaintop of the beginning of written prophecy, this man looked down through the centuries, seeing further than any other prophet saw -- he saw the Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord is a technical expression in Scripture which is fraught with meaning. It includes the millennial kingdom which will come at the second coming of Christ, but Joel is going to make it very clear to us that it begins with the Great Tribulation period, the time of great trouble. If you want to set a boundary or parenthesis at the end of the Day of the Lord, it would be the end of the Millennium when the Lord Jesus puts down all unrighteousness and establishes His eternal Kingdom here upon the earth.

The Day of the Lord is also an expression that is peculiar to the prophets of the Old Testament. It does not include the period when the church is in the world, because none of the prophets spoke about a group of people who would be called out from among the Gentiles, the nation Israel, and all the tribes of the earth, to be brought into one great body called the church which would be raptured out of this world. The prophets neither spoke nor wrote about the church.

James, at the great council of Jerusalem, more or less outlined the relationship between the church age and this period known as the Day of the Lord. He said, "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" ([Acts 15:14-16](#)). James says, "After this" -- after what? After He calls out the church from this world, God will again turn to His program with Israel, and it is to this time that the Day of the Lord refers. James went on to say, "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" ([Acts 15:17](#)). Today God is calling out of the Gentiles a people; in that day, all the Gentiles who will be entering the Kingdom will seek the Lord. I think there will be a tremendous turning to God at that time unlike any the church has ever witnessed.

Someone may question, "Why is God following this program?" James said, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" ([Acts 15:18](#)). Don't ask me why God is following this program -- ask Him, because I do not know and nobody else knows. He is following this program because it is His program and it is His universe. He is not responsible to you or to me. God doesn't turn in a report at the end of the week to tell us what He's been doing and to receive our approval. My friend, all I can say is that it is just too bad if you and I don't like it because, after all, we are just creatures down here in this world.

There are several special features about the prophecy of Joel which I would like to point out. Joel was the first of the writing prophets, and as he looked down through the centuries, he saw the coming of the Day of the Lord. However, I do not think he saw the church at all -- none of the prophets did. When the Lord Jesus went to the top of the Mount of Olives, men who were schooled in the Old Testament came and asked Him, "What is the sign of the end of the age?" Our Lord didn't mention His Cross to them at that time. He didn't tell them then about the coming of the Holy Spirit. He didn't tell them about the church period or mention the Rapture to them. Instead, the Lord went way down to the beginning of the Day of the Lord. He dated it, but it's not on your calendar or mine; the events He predicted will identify it for the people who will be there when the Day of the Lord begins: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)" ([Matt. 24:15](#)). That is how we are to know the beginning of the Day of the Lord. Joel will make it clear to us that it begins with night -- that is, it begins as a time of trouble. After all, the Hebrew day always began at sunset. Genesis tells us, "And the evening and the morning were the first day" ([Gen. 1:5](#)). We begin at sunup, but God begins at sundown. The Day of the Lord, therefore, begins with night.

It is remarkable to note that, unlike Hosea, Joel says practically nothing about himself. In Hosea we find out about the scandal that went on in his home, about his unfaithful wife. We do not know whether Joel had an unfaithful wife or not; we don't even know if he was married. The very first verse of the prophecy gives us all that we are to know: "The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel" ([Joel 1:1](#)).

Unlike many of the other prophets, Joel does not condemn Israel for idolatry. Earlier in their history, at the time Joel was prophesying, idolatry was not the great sin in Israel. Joel will only mention one sin, the sin of drunkenness.

Joel opens his prophecy with a unique description of a literal plague of locusts. Then he uses that plague of locusts to compare with the future judgments which will come upon this earth. The first chapter is a dramatic and literary gem. It is a remarkable passage of Scripture, unlike anything you will find elsewhere in literature.

Finally, Joel's prophecy contains the very controversial passage in which he mentions the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was referred to by the apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost (see [Joel 2:28-29](#)). There is a difference of interpretation concerning the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and we will look at that in detail when we come to it.

Outline

I. Literal and Local Plague of Locusts, [Joel 1:1-14](#)

II. Looking to the Day of the Lord (Prelude), [Joel 1:15](#) through [Joel 2:32](#)

III. Looking at the Day of the Lord (Postlude), [Joel 3](#)

A. The Great Tribulation, [Joel 3:1-15](#)

B. The Millennial Kingdom, [Joel 3:16-21](#)

Chapter 1

THEME: Literal and local plague of locusts; looking to the Day of the Lord (prelude)

The prophecy of Joel contains only three very brief chapters, but it holds an important position in Scripture. As the first of the writing prophets, it is Joel who introduces and defines the term, "the day of the LORD."

Literal And Local Plague Of Locusts (1:1-14)

The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel [[Joel 1:1](#)].

There are those who have thought that Joel was a son of Samuel (see [1Sam. 8:1-2](#)), but Samuel's sons were very wicked and this Joel certainly is not. This boy's father was Pethuel. Joel was a common name, and it means "Jehovah is God."

Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land.
Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?
[[Joel 1:2](#)].

Apparently Israel was in the midst of a great locust plague at this time. Locust plagues were rather commonplace in that land, but Joel calls to the old men and says, "Did anything like this ever happen in your day? Did it happen in the day of your fathers? Have you ever heard anything like this locust plague?" Of course, they had to say, "No, this is the worst we've ever had." The trouble with most of us as we begin to get older is that we have grandiose ideas about the past. If some young person comes and says to us, "Say, we just had a wonderful meeting at our church," we like to say, "That's wonderful, that was a great meeting, but we had a meeting that was twice as good back in my hometown when I was young." Joel said, "You old men have never heard of anything like this" -- and the old men had to agree that they had not.

Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children,
and their children another generation [[Joel 1:3](#)].

Joel goes on to say, "You can pass this on down. Tell your children about this and have them tell their children, because there's not going to be a plague of locusts like this ever again." Does this remind you of another passage of Scripture? In the Olivet Discourse in [Matthew 24](#), when the Lord Jesus identified the period which He Himself labeled the Great Tribulation period, He said the same thing about it. He said that there has never been anything like it before, and there is not going to be anything like it afterward. Now that more or less puts parentheses around that period and slips it into a unique slot in history. During the Great Tribulation no one will be able to say, "This reminds me of when I was a young fellow -- we had a real time of trouble back then." We have never had a period like the Great Tribulation. For all periods of recorded history in the past, there have always been previous times in history that could match it. However, the Lord Jesus made it very clear concerning the Great Tribulation: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" ([Matt. 24:21](#)). When people are in the midst of the Great Tribulation, there will be none of this questioning that we hear today: "Do you think that the Great Depression was the Great Tribulation?" Or, "Do you think that all this turmoil today is the Great Tribulation?" The answer is very easy to come by when we turn to the words of the Lord Jesus. He said there is nothing like it in the past. We've had times like this before, my friend -- they can all be duplicated in the past. And since things are not getting better but getting worse, neither can we say there will be nothing like this in the future.

In a very dramatic way, Joel is saying, "Look, this locust plague is unique -- there has never been anything like it, but there is coming another unique period called the Day of the Lord." The Day of the Lord will open with the Great Tribulation after the church has left this world. It will be a frightful time on this earth, horrible beyond description, and then Christ will come and establish His Kingdom. I wish the people who deny that the Bible teaches these things would study the total Word of God and not just lift out a few verses here and there. We need to study the entire Word of God to know what it says.

This plague of locusts stands alone as being different from any other plague that has taken place. The plague of locusts in the land of Egypt at the time of Moses was a miraculous plague -- it was a judgment of God. However, this plague was what we would call a natural event.

There are several things that we need to understand about the locust as many of us are not familiar with them at all. As a boy I always enjoyed lying on my bed before an open window on a summer evening and listening to the locusts in the trees. However, they were never a plague, and they probably were not the same kind of locusts which were in Israel in Bible times or even today. If you have ever seen pictures of fields after a plague of locusts, you know that locusts seem to have a scorched earth policy of their own -- it looks just as if a fire had burned over the field and destroyed everything.

The Word of God speaks of locusts, and one passage I will draw your attention to is [Proverbs 30:27](#), "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands." Locusts march as an army, and they are divided into different bands as they go. That will help us understand Joel's description of this locust plague as we come to [verse 4](#) --

That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and
that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and
that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten
[\[Joel 1:4\]](#).

It is true that four different words are used here -- the palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar. There are those who believe that this refers to four different types of insects, but there really is no basis for that. The palmerworm means "to gnaw off." The word for locust in Hebrew is arbeh and it suggests that there are many of them and they are migratory -- they move as a great swarm. The cankerworm means "to lick off," and the caterpillar means "to devour or to consume." These four words describe the locust and what he does. The locusts move in bands just like an army. First of all, there are the planes which come over and drop the bombs. Then after the bombs have been dropped by the air corps, the artillery comes through and destroys every section, leaving great areas devastated, but a great deal remains. Then the infantry comes along -- that's the third group -- and they get what has been left. The mop-up crew follows after that, and they will get what little may still be there. What we have here, therefore, are four words which describe the different bands of locusts. They have no general, they have no king, they have no lieutenants or sergeants, but they move just like an army.

Locusts were often sent by God as a judgment, but we would put this plague in the category of a natural plague. I believe that it was not necessarily a judgment, but a warning to the people, a warning to the nation. Joel was the first writing prophet, and he prophesied at the same time as Elijah. As Elijah was warning the northern kingdom, this man Joel, in a most dramatic manner, was warning the southern kingdom of a judgment that was coming. He will move from the local judgment -- it was the method of all the prophets to move from the local situation into the future -- to the judgment that is coming at the Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord is one of the most misunderstood terms and yet one of the most important in Scripture. Joel was the first to use it, and he makes very clear what the Day of the Lord is. After him, all the other prophets had to do was to speak of "that day," and it was understood as to what they were referring.

Now I am getting a little bit ahead of this chapter, but I want to say that Joel will move from this literal and local plague of locusts to speak of the Day of the Lord which begins

with the Great Tribulation period. How does the Great Tribulation period open? It opens with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: there is a false peace, then war breaks out, followed by a famine, and then finally the pale horse of death. I see a tremendous parallel between these four bands of locusts and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. During the Great Tribulation period it will not be literal locusts, but it will be something far worse that is going to ride, not just through that land, but through the entire world. The world will be totally devastated when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth to set up His Kingdom.

Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine,
because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth [[Joel 1:5](#)].

The locusts have gotten to the grapes first. They have stripped all the vineyards, and there will be no more wine for the drunkards. The man who was an alcoholic in that day found himself taking the cure before he intended to because there was no more wine to drink.

This reveals that, even at the beginning of the downfall of the nation Israel, the great sin was drunkenness. We are frequently reminded that most of the accidents which take place on our highways are caused by some individual who is exercising his freedom and right to drink. Entire families have been killed on the highway while out on a holiday because some drunk driver has hit them head-on. I may be criticized for moving into the realm of politics, but, my friend, I am studying the Word of God, and when it talks about drunkenness, I am going to talk about drunkenness. And when God's Word speaks about the king being a drunkard, then I will talk about drunkenness in my nation's capital. When we are told that there are dozens of cocktail parties every day in Washington, D.C., it is no wonder that some of the decisions which are being handed down look as if they were coming from men who are not in their right minds.

"Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine." At the very beginning, drunkenness was beginning to chip away the foundation of the nation Israel. This is the only sin Joel will mention. He will not mention idolatry at all, the great sin of turning from God, which eventually brought the nation down. At this time the people still made a profession of worshipping God.

For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without
number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek
teeth of a great lion [[Joel 1:6](#)].

Here the locusts are compared to an invading army and its destructiveness. These little bitty insects, the locusts, can tear a tree down. They can move through a field of grain and absolutely leave nothing but bare ground. They came along in these four bands with no leader, no king. They came, in most cases, as a judgment from God, but this plague was a warning from God. Later Joel will move ahead to that which is still future, the Day of the Lord which will be just like a locust plague upon the earth. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse are yet to ride.

He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made
it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made
white [[Joel 1:7](#)].

The locusts actually can kill a fig tree. They absolutely stripped a fig tree of its bark, leaving nothing but the naked wood exposed.

Joel is sending out a message to the people, and he is going to tell them what they are to do at a time like this. He will tell them ten things they are to do --

Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth [[Joel 1:8](#)].

He says something now that is unusual: (1) They are to lament. Like a young bride who has lost her husband, perhaps killed in battle, that is the way this nation should weep.

The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn [[Joel 1:9](#)].

"The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD." In other words, they are not able to make an offering at all. (2) "The priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn." All through this passage the same thing is said. The drunkards mourned and the priests mourned -- the entire economy was affected by this plague.

This verse and other verses lead us to believe that the prophet Joel was in Jerusalem. He speaks here to the priests who minister in the house of the Lord.

The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth [[Joel 1:10](#)].

There was no olive oil and no grapes and no grain. The three staple crops which they had were now destroyed. Even the land is to mourn. You see, the land and the people were closely intertwined. The Mosaic Law was not only given to a people, it was given to a land.

Joel has spoken to the drunkards, he has spoken to the priests, and now he will speak to the farmers:

Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men [[Joel 1:11-12](#)].

(3) "Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen." (4) "Howl, O ye vinedressers." The vinedressers are vineyard owners. "The apple tree" is actually the orange tree which is indigenous to that land.

Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God [[Joel 1:13](#)].

(5) "Gird yourselves," (6) "and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar." The priests could not perform their function because there was nothing for them to use for the

offerings. They were to lie all night girded with sackcloth and ashes because there was no meat offering and no drink offering. The economy of the land was wrecked, and there was not even enough to make an offering to God. However, God makes it clear that it was not the ritual that was important but the hearts of the people.

In these verses God is asking the people to do something that He had not asked before. When God gave the Mosaic Law, He gave seven feast days to these people, and He made it clear that He did not want them to come before Him with a long face. He wanted them to come to His house rejoicing and with joy in their hearts.

Have you noticed today that when Christians meet together in church it is generally not a very joyful occasion? I am even rebuked for telling funny stories. Sometimes I see a lot of saints who just sit there and do not even crack a smile. I wish they would -- I think it would do them good. There is no joy today, and there was no joy in Joel's day.

Why is God for the first time telling His people, "I want you to lament. I want you in sackcloth and ashes. I want you to mourn"? Before He had told them, "I want you to come before Me with joy." The reason is because of sin in the nation. That is the same reason there is such a lack of joy today. The world is surely working hard today. The music has to be loud and fast, and the jokes have to be dirty to even get a laugh. Even in our churches it is considered almost sinful to laugh out loud. Oh, my friend, where is our joy today? It is gone because of sin. God won't let us have joy. He said to these people, "Come before Me now with your mourning. I do not like it, but you are sinful and I want to see your repentance."

Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD [[Joel 1:14](#)].

(7) "Sanctify ye a fast." God had never asked them to do that before. God had given them feast days -- He never gave them a fast day until they plunged into sin. The one sin Joel mentions which was destroying the nation was drunkenness. It was robbing people of their normal thinking; they were not able to make right judgments.

(8) "Call a solemn assembly." In other words, they were to come together. God had wanted them to come together and rejoice in His presence, but now He says this is to be a solemn assembly.

(9) "Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God." This was a time to go to church. During World War II there were two rather godless men who were good friends and belonged to all different kinds of clubs (drinking clubs, most of them), but they met one Sunday at church. One of them said, "Well, I didn't know you went to church!" The other replied, "I don't usually go to church -- this is my first time. But I've got a son over there fighting in this war, and I thought it was about time I got to church." My friend, times of great trouble drive people to God. The people of the land were to come together for a fast day.

(10) "Cry unto the LORD." Why? Because God is merciful. God is gracious. God wants to forgive. Our God is a wonderful God. They were to come to Him in this time of difficulty, and He would hear and answer their prayer.

Joel has given a warning to these people, and he has given them these injunctions. These are the things they are to do if they want the blessing of God upon them.

Looking To The Day Of The Lord (prelude) (1:15-20)

In a masterly way, Joel now moves from the local situation, this plague of locusts, down to the end of the age and the Day of the Lord.

Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come [[Joel 1:15](#)].

"Alas for the day!" What day are you talking about, Joel? "For the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." Like a little model, a little adumbration of that which is coming in the future, this local plague of locusts was a warning, a picture of the coming Day of the Lord. It should have alerted the people.

Joel is now going to tell them about something in the future. That which was coming in the future, the thing which had been promised to David, was a kingdom. David would be raised up to rule over that Kingdom. War would cease, and there would be peace on the earth. All the prophets spoke about that, but they also spoke about what Joel is saying here -- the coming of the Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord must be understood in contrast to the other days which are mentioned in Scripture. You and I are living today in what Scripture calls man's day. It began with Nebuchadnezzar, and the Lord Jesus labeled it "the times of the Gentiles." He said, ". . . Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" ([Luke 21:24](#)). We are living in a man's day. Man is the one who makes the judgments today. We appeal to the Supreme Court, but we do not appeal to God. We have forgotten Him altogether. His name is just a word to swear by and to blaspheme.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer makes this comment concerning man's day: "This theme, obscured at times by translators, is referred to but once in the New Testament, namely, [1Corinthians 4:3](#), which reads, 'But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment, yea, I judge not mine own self.' Now in this passage the phrase, 'man's judgment' is really a reference to human opinion current in this age, which might properly and literally be translated, 'man's day.' "

We are living in the day of man. Believe me, humanism abounds today. Man believes he can solve the problems of the world, but what has man really done? He has gotten the world into an awful mess right now. Every new politician who comes along thinks he has the answer. My friend, they do not have the answers; man cannot solve the problems of this world. I understand there have been some admissions in the cloakrooms of our own government and the chancelleries of the great nations of the world that man is incapable of solving the problems of the world today.

Scripture speaks of another day that is coming -- the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in [1Corinthians 1:7-8](#): "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." What is the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is the day when He will come to take His church out of this world, and then the church

will come before the judgment seat of Christ. My life verse is [Philippians 1:6](#) which reads, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (italics mine). He is going to keep us until that day when He takes us out of the world and we appear before Him to see whether we receive a reward or not.

Both the Old and the New Testament speak of the Day of the Lord. [2Thessalonians 2:2](#) tells us, "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." The Thessalonian believers were afraid that they would miss the Rapture. Our translation of this verse is an unfortunate one -- the word Christ should have been translated as "Lord" -- in other words, "as the day of the Lord is at hand." Paul is assuring the believers that they will not go through the Day of the Lord.

Joel will make very clear what the Day of the Lord is. He will say that the Day of the Lord is a dark, gloomy, and difficult day. The Hebrew viewpoint was that they would enter immediately into the Kingdom -- that life would be a breeze with no problems at all. But Joel says that the Day of the Lord begins with night, with darkness. That darkness is the Great Tribulation period. It will be like this locust plague that has come with its four bands of locusts like the four horsemen of the Apocalypse who will ride in the Great Tribulation period. Then the Day of the Lord will include the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His Kingdom. Then His people will enter into the sunshine of His presence. That was the Old Testament hope; that was the thing the Old Testament taught.

My friend, you can see how important it is to study all of the Bible. One man wrote to me to explain what he thought the day of the Lord was. He wrote several pages, giving Scripture after Scripture, but he never gave one verse from Joel. He didn't understand that Joel is the very key. Joel was the first of the writing prophets. You cannot say the Day of the Lord is something other than what Joel says it is; it must fit into the program which he describes. All the prophets who came after him used this term many times. "The Day of the Lord" occurs about seventy-five times in the entire Bible; "the day of the LORD" occurs five times and "that day" one time in the Book of Joel. All of the prophets have a great deal to say about the Day of the Lord, and we need to recognize that it is a technical term which is defined and used consistently in Scripture.

To summarize, there is (1) man's day, the day in which we are living now; (2) the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He will take the church out of this world; then (3) the Day of the Lord beginning with the Great Tribulation period. After all, we label the different days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and so on. God has labeled these different periods of time also. This is not something men thought of, but it is what the Word of God teaches.

I should say that the Day of the Lord is not the same as the Lord's Day that is mentioned in [Revelation 1:10](#). The Lord's Day is the first day of the week, which the New Testament makes very clear. Many people say the Day of the Lord and the Lord's Day are the same just because they use the same two words. That is ridiculous -- as ridiculous as saying there is no difference between a chestnut horse and a horse chestnut. If you take two words and turn them around, you get something altogether different. In the one you've

got a nut, and in the other you've got a horse! The Day of the Lord and the Lord's Day are two different things.

Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? [[Joel 1:16](#)].

Joel continues talking about this plague of locusts. There was no more joy and gladness in the house of God. I have had the privilege in the past few years of my ministry of speaking in the great pulpits of this country and at many of the great Bible conferences. I have noted that there is a sadness in congregations as they come together today. In many places I have found that at the first service there is an air of expectancy. You can feel it, the air is charged with it, but there is no note of gladness. At some meetings in Florida, a man with the FBI said to me, "I've been watching your method. I've noted that you get up before a congregation, and you slide very quietly and slowly into a funny story to get the people into a good humor." I said, "You've noticed that?" And he said, "Yes, and I think I know why you do it. I think you're doing it because there is a low level of joy among the people today." I told the man that he was right. The joy was gone in Israel, and today, even when we have everything, there is no joy in our services.

The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered [[Joel 1:17](#)].

"The seed is rotten under their clods." The grain couldn't even come up, because the locusts had just gnawed off the shoots even with the ground. "The garners are laid desolate" -- they could not fill up the granary.

How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field [[Joel 1:18-19](#)].

The locusts have their own scorched earth policy. It was just as if the ground had been entirely burned off.

The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness [[Joel 1:20](#)].

This was a very terrible, treacherous time. Even the animal world -- both the animals in the barnyard and the wild animals out yonder in the forest -- were being affected by this plague. It was a judgment that touched all life in that land in that day, and it becomes a picture of the Day of the Lord that is coming.

Chapter 2

THEME: Looking to the Day of the Lord; God's plea; promise of deliverance; promise of the Holy Spirit

This chapter continues the prelude which was begun in [Joel 1:15](#), and, of course, continues the theme.

Looking To The Day Of The Lord (2:1-11)

You recall that God had promised David a kingdom, and that wonderful future kingdom became the theme song of all the prophets after David. The great message is that the millennial Kingdom is coming upon this earth. As we read the prophets, it sounds like a stuck record as one after another looks forward to it.

Now Joel, the first of the writing prophets, makes it clear that the Day of the Lord -- which includes the millennial Kingdom -- will not be all peaches and cream. Before the millennial Kingdom (when the Lord Jesus will be ruling on this earth), there will be a time which the Lord Jesus defined as the Great Tribulation period. Chapter 2 will make this clear to us.

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand [[Joel 2:1](#)].

"The day of the LORD cometh." Let me remind you that Joel is the first of the writing prophets, and he looks way down through the centuries and sees the Day of the Lord. It begins with darkness, that is, with judgment. Then Christ comes to the earth and establishes His Kingdom. Malachi speaks of Him as the ". . . Sun of righteousness [who will] arise with healing in his wings . . ." ([Mal. 4:2](#)).

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain." "Zion" and "my holy mountain" refer to Jerusalem. He says they should blow the trumpet and sound an alarm. It is important for us to understand the significance of the trumpet. One needs to have a full-orbed view of the Bible so that on any given subject we are able to put our thinking down on all four corners and make an induction. Understanding the background will enable us to appreciate what the writer is saying.

What is the significance of the blowing of the trumpet? Back in the Book of Numbers we learn that when the children of Israel started through the wilderness, God commanded them to make two silver trumpets. He gave the instructions to Moses: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps" ([Num. 10:1-2](#)). When Israel was in the wilderness, God used the trumpets to move them on the wilderness march. The first blowing of the trumpet was a signal that everybody should get ready to march. When the pillar of cloud would lift and move out, they would take down the tabernacle. Then immediately the trumpet would sound again, and Moses and Aaron would move up front ahead of the tribe of Judah, and the ark would go out ahead with them. You will remember that Israel was encamped around the tabernacle on all four sides, three tribes on each side. Now each section would move out in turn, signaled by the blowing of the trumpets. Actually, to get the whole camp on the march, the trumpets were blown seven different times.

Now when we come to Revelation, the final book of the Bible, we find the blowing of the trumpets again. Although some expositors feel that this is in relation to the church, there

is no blowing of the trumpet for the church. The sound of the trumpet at the time of the Rapture ([1Thess. 4:16](#)) will be the shout of Christ Himself: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . ." -- His voice will be like a trumpet.

The seven trumpets in Revelation have nothing to do with the church. The church will have been completed and will have been taken out of the world. The seven trumpets are identified with the nation Israel, just as there were the seven trumpet calls in the wilderness march.

If we turn back to the Book of Numbers, we will see that the different trumpet calls meant certain definite things. They were a way of giving instructions to Israel: "And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm" ([Num. 10:3-7](#)). Then he gives instructions for the time they will be in the Promised Land: "And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies" ([Num. 10:9](#)). During the time of war the trumpet would call the men of war to defend their country when an enemy was coming.

Now here in Joel's prophecy he says, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain." Why? "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh [near] at hand." You see, after the Lord has called His church out of the world, He will turn again to the nation of Israel, which becomes the object of worldwide anti-Semitism. This is the beginning of the Day of the Lord.

Now in this second chapter, Joel is going to give a blending of the plague of locusts together with the threat of the Assyrian army and then look down the avenue of time into the future and the Day of the Lord. Of course the liberal theologian would say this refers simply to the locust plague and the local situation. He would like to dismiss a great deal of meaning from the Word of God. The other extreme view is to say this refers only to the Great Tribulation period.

I think we need to see that in Joel there is a marvelous blending. He moves right out of the locust plague to the Day of the Lord which is way out yonder in the future. You recall that was the practice of the prophets to speak into a local situation and then move out into the future Day of the Lord -- which includes the Tribulation period and the Millennium.

The local situation was the plague of locusts, and in the near future the Assyrian army was coming down: "But I will remove far off from you the northern army" ([v. 20](#)). I think it would be rather ridiculous to call a plague of locusts the northern army, but the plague of locusts was a picture of the Assyrian army that would be coming out of the north, and the Assyrian army becomes the picture of the enemy which will be coming out of the north in the last days. As we see in chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel, the northern army

refers to present-day Russia which will invade Israel. In fact, Russia's coming will usher in the last half of the Great Tribulation period.

Let me remind you that the Day of the Lord is not a twenty-four hour day, but a period of time. The apostle Paul used it in that sense when he said, ". . . now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" ([2Cor. 6:2](#), italics mine), speaking of the age of grace.

Let me repeat that the Day of the Lord is different from the Lord's Day, which refers to the first day of the week. Although the two words are the same, their arrangement makes all the difference. The difference is as great as between a chestnut horse and a horse chestnut!

Now Joel will put down God's definition that will condition and limit the prophets who will speak in the future. After this, all of them will speak into this period. It is interesting to find that none of them contradict each other, even though some of the prophets didn't know what the others were prophesying.

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations [[Joel 2:2](#)].

This is the same period about which the Lord Jesus said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" ([Matt. 24:21](#)). The Great Tribulation opens the Day of the Lord because that is the way the Hebrew day opens; it begins in the evening at the time of darkness. I have a notion that when the plague of locusts came over the land, they would actually darken the sky because there would be so many of them. And the Day of the Lord will begin with darkness.

A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them [[Joel 2:3](#)].

Before the plague of locusts came, the earth looked like the Garden of Eden. Everything was green with rich, luxurious foliage. The land was beautiful. After the locusts left, there was not a bit of green to be seen. It looked as if a fire had swept over the land.

The Day of the Lord will be the same in that it will be a time of destruction. When the four horsemen of the Apocalypse ride through this world, there will be war and famine and death. In one fell swoop, one fourth of the population will be wiped out, and at another time, one third of the population will be destroyed.

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run [[Joel 2:4](#)].

As I indicated before, the head of the locust resembles a horse's head, and the Italian word for locust means "little horse"; the German word means "hay horse." As the horse

eats hay, the locusts would eat up everything green. Joel is describing the locust plague and is beginning to make application of it to the Day of the Lord.

Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap,
like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a
strong people set in battle array.

Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall
gather blackness [[Joel 2:5-6](#)].

"All faces shall gather blackness" -- that is, they will be scorched.

They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men
of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall
not break their ranks [[Joel 2:7](#)].

In the Book of Proverbs it says this: "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands" ([Prov. 30:27](#)). They don't need a king or a leader -- each one knows his place. They come in bands. When Joel describes four different groups of locusts here, I believe he is describing the movement of a great army -- an army of locusts. In the last days, there will come against that land another enemy, and it will come like a locust plague. This is a preparation for the Book of Revelation in which the apostle John writes of a locust plague that will take place on the earth during the first woe which follows the blowing of the fifth trumpet: "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" ([Rev. 9:1-4](#)).

This is an unusual locust that will not attack anything green -- that is all the normal locust would attack. They did not attack human beings. But these locusts will attack "only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads."

It will be such a terrifying time that men will seek death and will not be able to find it; that is, they will not be able to commit suicide: "And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them" ([Rev. 9:5-6](#)).

Now notice this description of the locusts: "And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions" ([Rev. 9:7-8](#)). My friend, that is an unusual type of locust! This plague will take place during the Great Tribulation.

You can see that Joel, way back here at the beginning of the writing prophets, prepares the ground for the apostle John to come later and give the detailed description of the locusts as they will appear in the Day of the Lord.

May I just say that this is the reason I think it is tragic today to find so many people who have just been converted who think they are qualified to start a Bible class. What books do they like to start to teach? Usually you will find they choose either the Gospel of John or the Book of Revelation. In my judgment, that is not the place to begin with new believers. I believe Matthew is the key book to the Bible. Until you understand Matthew, I don't think you will quite get the message of the Gospel of John and I know you will miss the message of the Book of Revelation. And this little prophet Joel, who has been by and large ignored, sheds a great deal of light on the last days which he calls the Day of the Lord.

When Joel writes: "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war," he is beginning to move from the local locust plague into the future which he has labeled the Day of the Lord.

In the next verse we will see that he is talking about the Day of the Lord.

Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining [[Joel 2:8-10](#)].

Obviously this is more than a local locust plague or else Joel is exaggerating; the prophets spoke God's Word as He gave it to them -- they didn't exaggerate. This is the same picture that John gives us in the Book of Revelation.

And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? [[Joel 2:11](#)].

This is the third time Joel has mentioned the Day of the Lord.

"Who can abide it?" This is very much the same as Jesus said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" ([Matt. 24:22](#)). And Joel asks, "Who can abide it?" Well, John gives the answer in Revelation. In chapter 7 he says that God will shut down the forces of nature, withholding the winds from blowing (which are judgments of God upon the earth) until the two great companies of the redeemed are sealed and made secure. If God's people are going to make it through the terrible time of tribulation, they will have to be sealed. When Joel asks, "Who can abide it?" the "it" is the Day of the Lord, which begins in darkness, the night of the Great Tribulation.

God's Plea (2:12-17)

Now the question is: What can a sinner do in a period like this? Well, Joel gives the answer for that:

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning [[Joel 2:12](#)].

"Turn ye even to me with all your heart." The word turn means "repent." God says to His people whose hearts are turned from Him, "Repent." Repent means primarily to change your mind. You indicate a change of mind by turning around. It is true there may be some shedding of tears along with the repentance, but that is only a by-product of repentance. Repentance really means to change your mind.

When I first entered the ministry, I went to my home church in Nashville as a pastor. I had some of the most wonderful people in that church -- they had to be wonderful to put up with me! It was my first pastorate, and I was as green as grass. I could be very serious but also rather frivolous. I was not married yet; so I would take off to go to Atlanta, Georgia, or to Memphis, Tennessee, because I knew some girls in both places.

The man who was humanly responsible for my entering the ministry was in that church. He had arranged a loan for me because I was a poor boy with no money. Also he had helped me get a job. He was like a father to me, and I loved him as a father.

One day I went to the bank to tell him something that I had in mind. He let me know immediately that my idea was not a very good idea, as many of mine have not been. He let me know in no uncertain terms. That angered me, so I turned and started out the door. When I got to the street, I thought, "This is not right. I owe this man a great deal." So I turned around and went back. Do you know why I turned around? Because it came into my mind and into my heart that I ought to do it. When I got back to his office I saw tears coming from his eyes. By the way, when my wife and I were in Nashville on our honeymoon, he said to her, "I don't know much about you, whether or not you get angry quickly, but Vernon has a very high temper, and don't both of you get angry at the same time!" Well, one of things that made my wife so attractive to me was her mild, even temper, and she has put up with a whole lot from this poor preacher! But the day I returned to his office I repented of the thing I had done, and I manifested it in turning and going back to him.

Now when God says, "Turn ye even to me with all your heart," He means to repent, and the by-product of it will be fasting, weeping, and mourning. Unfortunately, a great many people think that if they go down to an altar and shed enough tears, they are converted. Well, I went through that process as a boy and found it to be absolutely meaningless.

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil [[Joel 2:13](#)].

You see, this was to be a heart experience, not some outward gesture. Actually, the Mosaic Law forbade the priest from tearing his garments. Repentance was not to be shown by being a fanatic. The tear was to be in the heart.

"And turn unto the LORD your God" is repentance.

Now he gives the reason for turning to the Lord: "For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." In the Books of Exodus and Jonah, I deal more thoroughly with the question of what it means when God repents. When Israel was in Egypt, it looked as if God changed His mind. He sent plague after plague to Egypt to give Pharaoh the opportunity to repent and turn to Him, but he didn't. Also in Jonah's day, God sent Jonah to preach to the Ninevites that He would destroy the city. However, Ninevah repented and turned to God; so God did not destroy the city. It looked as if God had changed His mind after He said that He would destroy the city, but He did not change His mind. God is immutable. He is always gracious; He is always merciful, and He is always slow to anger.

My friend, you can always depend upon God. He never changes, He is immutable; but when a sinner repents and turns to Him, God says in effect, "You were under My judgment, and I was going to judge you, but now that you have turned to Me, I will not judge you." God is always gracious and ready to forgive.

Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? [[Joel 2:14](#)].

In other words, "The Lord will bless you again in the field and in the vineyard, and you will have a drink offering and you'll have a meat offering to bring to Him."

Incidentally, the drink offering is mentioned here; yet there is no instruction in Leviticus for a drink offering. The drink offering was poured on the other offerings and became a part of them. When it was poured on the sacrifice, it went up in steam on the hot coals. The apostle Paul, you recall, said that he wanted his life to be like that -- just a drink offering on the sacrifice of Christ.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly [[Joel 2:15](#)].

At the beginning of this chapter we saw that the blowing of the trumpet was used to call an assembly and also to sound an alarm. In [verse 1](#) it was to sound an alarm. Now here at [verse 15](#) it is to call an assembly. The people were to be brought together to hear God's message so that they might have the opportunity to turn to God. He is gracious and good, and He is willing to accept them.

"Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." As we have seen, in the Mosaic system God gave His people only feast days. They were to come before Him with rejoicing. But now that they are in sin and rebellion against Him and have turned from Him, they are to fast and come before Him in a solemn assembly.

My friend, the only way we can come to Him is to come as sinners wanting to turn from our sins. If you have been turning from God and now will turn to God, all you have to do is call upon Him and He will save you. ". . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . ." ([Acts 16:31](#)). You don't need to do anything but that. You don't need

to join a church, go through a ceremony, or promise Him something. You simply turn as a sinner to Christ for His mercy.

It is interesting that the word for preaching or evangelizing or heralding the gospel is a word that means trumpet. The trumpet call of the New Testament is the gospel message that we are to get out to the world. "Blow the trumpet in Zion." This is to call a solemn assembly. When people respond to an altar call and come down to the front of the church, it is a solemn moment. They are testifying that they are turning to God from sin. That is serious business and should not be done lightly. However, I emphasize again that it is not merely going to the altar of a church that constitutes real repentance.

A lovely young couple in Memphis responded to an altar call and came down to the front of the church after a message I had given. I went down to talk to them and asked them, "Is this the first time you have responded to a call?"

"Noo, we come down every Sunday.

"Then why do you come down to the altar?"

"Because we want all that God has for us."

"Do you think you will get that by just coming down here?"

"We hope so."

"Let me ask you another question. Do you think you have it now?"

"No, we don't."

"Then I would get a little discouraged if I were you. Maybe this isn't the way it is to be done. Maybe you are trying man's way, and God has another way. God wants to be good and gracious to you, and He wants to save you, but you must come to Him His way. No man comes to the Father but by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only door to heaven." Jesus Himself said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" ([John 10:9](#)).

Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders,
gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the
bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet
[\[Joel 2:16\]](#).

"Gather the children, and those that suck the breasts" sounds as if the little children were to be taken care of in the nursery so their mothers could give this assembly their full attention. Notice that even the bridegroom is to go to the assembly. When a man was married in Israel, he was excused from going to war for one year. In fact, he was excused from a lot of duties so he could get acquainted with his bride. I guess that was an advantage of getting married! However, God is saying here that everybody is to be gathered together -- even the bridegroom and the bride if they are on their honeymoon.

Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch
and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and
give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule
over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is
their God? [\[Joel 2:17\]](#).

The priests and the ministers of the Lord are to weep. Joel is in Jerusalem, you see; he is a prophet of the southern kingdom.

They were to pray, "Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen [nations] should rule over them." Israel has been scattered throughout the world to this day. Although they have a nation and a government and a flag, they are still pretty well subject to the nations of the world. As I write this, they are caught in the oil slick which is causing them a great deal of trouble, and it will continue to cause trouble because they are not back in the land today in fulfillment of prophecy. When God puts them back into the land, there will be no problem relative to the oil situation.

Golda Meir made a statement which inferred that Moses had made a mistake. She said something like this: "Imagine! Moses led all of our people around through the wilderness for forty years and brought them to the only place in this area that has no oil!" Well, if she believed the Old Testament, she would know that they were led by a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day, and that God had a definite purpose for keeping them from settling on land that was rich with oil. They would never have gotten their land back -- that's for sure! Actually what Israel needs is not oil but water. They don't have enough water because the judgment of God is upon them. Moses made no mistake because he was following the orders of God, and certainly God makes no mistakes.

"Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" They were wondering what was happening to them. And today that is still their question. In Israel I talked with a sharp young Jewish fellow at the King David Hotel. He said, "If it is as you say that we are God's chosen people, why doesn't He intervene for us today?" I told him very candidly, "Because right now, you are not with God. Until you come back in repentance to Him, He is not dealing with you as His chosen people. Today God is doing a new thing: He is calling out from among your people and my people -- Jews and Gentiles -- a people to His name. You are just not up to date with God. You are going way back to the Mosaic system which is outmoded. The latest thing, the newest model, is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ." You see, God is inviting "whosoever will" to trust Christ and become a part of the new organism which He calls the church.

Promise Of Deliverance (2:18-27)

Now he is definitely moving into the future. Notice the time-word "Then." It will appear several times in this chapter.

Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people [[Joel 2:18](#)].

In the Olivet Discourse (see [Matt. 24](#) -- 25), the Lord Jesus used the word then to advance in time the happenings that will take place in the Great Tribulation period. At the end of the Great Tribulation period, just before the Lord returns to this earth, then will He be jealous for His land and pity His people.

Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen [[Joel 2:19](#)].

At that time the Lord will give them corn and wine and oil; they will be satisfied, and no longer will they be a reproach among the heathen. Even the most radical today would not say that this is being fulfilled now. The largest population of Israel is not in the land. There are more Jews in New York City than there are in Israel. And there is a great company of them even in Russia. This is not being fulfilled at this time. This still looks forward to the future. It is definitely the period known as the Day of the Lord, which will begin with darkness and move on into the dawn of the Millennium, past man's rebellion that breaks out on the earth, and on to the beginning of the eternal Kingdom. From here on we are bottled into that particular period.

But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things [[Joel 2:20](#)].

"I will remove far off from you the northern army" certainly is not talking about locusts but an army coming down from the north. This was partially fulfilled when Assyria came down and took the northern kingdom, but God miraculously delivered the southern kingdom from them. It was another hundred years before the southern kingdom went into captivity -- and then it was to the Babylonians, not the Assyrians.

However, there is still a future fulfillment of the removal of the northern army. This is given in more detail in [Ezekiel 38](#) -- [Ezekiel 39](#). In the Great Tribulation period Russia will come down from the north, but God will deliver Israel. The description given here fits the description of the Battle of Armageddon. "And will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things." The Sea of Galilee is on one side and the Mediterranean Sea is on the other side of the Valley of Esdraelon where Armageddon will take place. God will intervene as we have seen in Ezekiel. He will destroy this enemy that comes from the north, and He does it to glorify His name.

God is glorified when He judges sin just as much as He is when He saves a sinner. That is hard for us to believe; it is a bitter pill for man to swallow. God is holy, and a holy, righteous God is going to judge. Every one of the prophets says that. The Word of God has a lot to say about the judgment of God. But He doesn't like to judge. We have already seen that He is gracious and merciful and slow to anger. Judgment is a strange work for God. That is why He holds out His hands all the day long and asks us to come to Him. When people refuse to turn to Him, He must judge them in His righteousness and in His holiness.

This is true even for the children of God. When we do wrong, if we do not judge ourselves, God must judge us. He chastens us to bring us back to Himself. To be honest with you, I have had some chastening from the Lord. I want to stick very close to my Heavenly Father because, I can tell you, I don't enjoy the chastening of the Lord.

Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things [[Joel 2:21](#)].

The Tribulation period will lead to the coming of Christ to earth to establish His Kingdom. Today that land is still under a curse. They need water. The land is far from being a Garden of Eden. Anyone who has driven from Jerusalem to Jericho will have to admit it is just as desolate as the desert in Arizona and California.

You will notice that the church is not in this picture. Neither do we find the church in the Olivet Discourse nor in the Book of Revelation after chapter 4. The believers have been raptured, and there is no longer a church on earth. And when the church gets to heaven it will no longer be called the church (ekklesia, meaning "called out"), but the figure changes and the believers will be called the bride of Christ.

Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength [[Joel 2:22](#)].

This day has not come yet.

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month [[Joel 2:23](#)].

Who are the "children of Zion"? Of course they are the people of the southern kingdom -- that is where Zion is located. You and I may sing lustily, "We're marching to Zion," but we are not marching to the Zion here upon this earth.

When he speaks of the "rain," he is talking about literal rain. In [verse 28](#) Joel will make application of it in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, but he is referring to literal rain in this verse. The former rain came in October, and the latter rain came in April. There are other passages in the Bible that speak of the former and the latter rains which were quite literal rains in the land of Israel (see [Lev. 26:3-4](#); [Deut. 11:14-17](#); [1Kings 8:35-36](#); [Jer. 3:3](#); [Hos. 6:3](#)).

Before I went over to Israel, I heard that the latter rain was returning to that land. Well, I have been over there in April, and it rained a little. But, gracious, I don't think people would call that the kind of rain which the Lord is talking about. In former days they really had rain. All those rugged hills of that land were covered with trees. The enemies came in and denuded the land, and today they are trying to set out trees, but they are having trouble making those trees grow because there is not enough of the latter rain. Joel is talking about these literal rains -- H2O -- which God has promised in the future.

And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you [[Joel 2:24-25](#)].

"I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." There have been a great many sermons preached on this, spiritualizing this passage. And it certainly can be used as an application since it states a great principle. We find the same thought in the Book of Revelation where God says, ". . . Behold, I make all things new . . ." ([Rev. 21:5](#)). He is

speaking of the New Jerusalem in this chapter. Those of the church, the sinners who have trusted Christ, are going to be there. He tells us how wonderful it will be and about the fact that He will wipe away all tears from our eyes. What a change that will be! There are a lot of tears in this old world. I rejoice that He will make all things new.

I don't know about you, but I can say that I am not satisfied with my life down here. I have never preached the sermon I have wanted to preach -- I wish I could do it. I have had it in my heart and in my mind, but somehow I have never been able to preach as well as I have wanted to. I have never been the husband that I have really wanted to be. I wish that I could have been a much better husband to my wife. When I was sick, she and I went back over the days when we met and how we courted, and all that sort of thing. As I told her, I wish I could change many things which would make it lots more wonderful than it was. Neither have I been the father that I wanted to be. I have never really been the man that I have wanted to be. That is why I love [Revelation 21:5](#): ". . . Behold, I make all things new. . . ." My Lord will say, "Vernon McGee, you didn't quite make it down there on the earth. You never really accomplished your goals. You were frustrated. You were limited. You were down there with that old sinful nature. Now I am going to make all things new. I'm going to give you a new scratch pad and a new pencil without an eraser. You can write it all out now. You can accomplish what you wanted to accomplish."

My friend, that will really make heaven heaven for a lot of us. We will be able to do the things and be the person that we have wanted to be down here. Oh, to be free from the hindrances of circumstances, of sin, of the environment, and even of heredity. What a glorious experience to be free of all this and to be in the presence of Christ! He will make all things new. He will restore the years that the locusts have eaten.

And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed [[Joel 2:26-27](#)].

This will take place when he is "in the midst of Israel"; that is, when Christ has come to the earth and has established His Kingdom. At that time there will be a fulfillment of all the physical blessings which God has promised to the nation Israel. And the blessings in the Old Testament were largely physical blessings. God promised to bless the land so that they would have bumper crops and their cattle would thrive and multiply. Actually the spiritual blessings seem almost secondary. In contrast to this, the blessings God has promised the church are spiritual blessings -- only. We have all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

Even though the primary blessings to Israel were physical blessings, we come now to a passage which speaks of spiritual blessing to Israel. This is a very controversial passage of Scripture.

Promise Of The Holy Spirit (2:28-32)

As we come to this section, it is important to keep in mind that we are in the prophecy of Joel that began with the record of a frightful locust plague which he compared to that which is coming in the future, which he calls the Day of the Lord. We have seen that the Day of the Lord will begin with the Tribulation period, after which Christ will come and establish His Kingdom on the earth. In [verse 27](#) we have just read that the Lord at this time will be in the midst of them. Now let's see what He is going to do.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call [[Joel 2:28-32](#)].

There are many wonderful things that we could say about this passage of Scripture. Dr. Charles L. Feinberg, a Jewish Christian, and an outstanding Hebrew scholar, has written a fine series of books on the Minor Prophets which have been very helpful to me. In Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, pp. 26-27, he calls attention to something that I had not known before: "Verses 28 through 32 form chapter 3 in the Hebrew text; and chapter 3 in the English translations is chapter 4 in the original. No one will be inclined to doubt that the disclosure of truth in [Joel 2:28-32](#) is of sufficient importance to warrant its appearing in a separate chapter." I certainly agree that these five verses are important enough to make them a separate chapter.

In understanding this prophecy, it is of utmost importance to note the time of fulfillment indicated in this passage: "And it shall come to pass (afterward)." Joel has been telling us about the coming Day of the Lord. As the first of the writing prophets, he introduced it, and he tells what is going to take place during that period. He has emphasized the fact that it will begin with the darkness of the Great Tribulation period (our Lord Jesus gave it that name). We noted the importance of the time sequence in Hosea. In chapter 3, [verse 5](#) of that prophecy it is written: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days." We identified the "latter days" as that time of the Great Tribulation period which ushers in the Kingdom by the coming of Christ to the earth, which is the beginning of the Millennium. This leads us to conclude that Joel is now speaking of a very definite period of time, that this prophecy is to be fulfilled during the Day of the Lord, after the night of the Great Tribulation period. Then God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh.

Although Joel is the first of the writing prophets, he is not the only one to mention the pouring out of the Spirit. In Isaiah we read: "Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest" ([Isa. 32:15](#)). He is speaking of the Kingdom which is coming on the earth, and the pouring out of the Spirit has reference to the Millennium. Of course none of the prophets spoke of the church age; all of them spoke of the last days in reference to the nation Israel.

[Ezekiel 36:27](#) says this: "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Then he continues, "And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" ([Ezek. 36:28](#)). Now he is talking to a particular people and a particular land -- Israel. It is also a particular period of time when God will pour out His Spirit. Also Ezekiel says: "And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD" ([Ezek. 37:14](#)). That's not all: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD" ([Ezek. 39:29](#)).

Zechariah is one of the last of the writing prophets. He says, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" ([Zech. 12:10](#)).

Joel also makes it clear in the passage we are discussing -- "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance" -- that he refers to a certain spot on the map.

The question arises: What did Peter mean when he referred to this passage of Scripture on the Day of Pentecost? Did he mean that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled? No, he didn't say that. He never claimed that this prophecy was fulfilled.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples they began to speak to Jews who had come to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire. Every man heard the message in his own tongue. These were not unknown tongues in which the disciples were speaking the message. Each tongue was the native tongue of one or more of the men who were gathered there from all over the Roman Empire and even beyond the empire.

Well, many believed, but others began to mock and say that the disciples were drunk -- filled with new wine. So Simon Peter is the one who gets up to answer them. He acted as the spokesman for the group, and he gave an answer to the accusation that they were drunk. ". . . Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day" ([Acts 2:14-15](#)). Peter says you wouldn't find people drunk in the morning. (It's a little different in modern America -- some people start drinking pretty early in the day.)

Peter continues, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" ([Acts 2:16](#)). You will notice that Peter does not say that this is in fulfillment of what the prophet Joel said. All the Gospel writers and the apostle Paul are very clear when they say that something is the fulfillment of a prophecy. I couldn't begin to mention all of the passages. For examples, turn to [Matthew 2:17-18](#): "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not" (*italics mine*). That was a fulfillment of prophecy that had to do with incidents associated with the birth of Christ. Drop down to [verse 23](#): "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (*italics mine*). Or turn to [Acts 13](#) to the sermon of Paul at Antioch in Pisidia. He speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and says, "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" ([Acts 13:32-33](#), *italics mine*). The Bible is very definite about fulfillment of prophecy.

What does Peter say in [Acts 2:16](#)? ". . . this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (*italics mine*). He does not say it was a fulfillment of what Joel had predicted. Rather, he said, "This is that" -- this is like that or similar to that. If you will go back in your mind to the Day of Pentecost, you will realize that Peter was not talking to Gentiles; he was speaking to Jews who were schooled in the Old Testament. They knew the Old Testament. They were Jews from all over the empire who had come to Jerusalem for the feast; they had traveled long distances because they were keeping what was required of them according to the Mosaic Law. Peter says to them in effect, "Don't mock, don't ridicule this thing which you see happening. This is like that which is going to take place in the Day of the Lord as it is told to us by the prophet Joel."

He quotes Joel's prophecy. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . ." ([Acts 2:17](#), *italics mine*). This is to occur in the last days. Then the Spirit of God will be poured out upon all flesh. Was that fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost? Hardly. It was experienced by those enumerated in the previous chapter. And three thousand were saved. Even if it had been three hundred thousand who were saved, it still would not have been a pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh. It would still not have been a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

In effect, Peter is saying to them, "Don't mock at what you see happening. You ought to recognize from your own Word of God that Joel says the day is coming when God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. If it is poured out on a few people today, you ought not to be surprised at that."

Then Peter went on to quote the rest of Joel's prophecy regarding what would take place: "I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come" ([vv. 30-31](#)). Was that fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost? Of course not. There were no earthquakes, no changes in the sun and moon. These will occur on "that great and notable day of the Lord." Joel calls it, "the great and

terrible day of the LORD." The Day of Pentecost was a great day, but it was not a terrible day. It was a wonderful day!

My friend, if we understand the Book of Joel, we will never come to the conclusion that Peter was saying that the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. Simon Peter was merely using Joel's prophecy as an introduction to answer those who were mocking.

Now the question arises: What was the subject of Simon Peter's message? On the Day of Pentecost the subject of Simon Peter's sermon was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when he comes to his text, he uses [Psalm 16:8-10](#), which prophesied the resurrection of Christ. Notice how he applies it to Christ: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear ([Acts 2:32-33](#)).

The conclusion both in Joel and in Peter's address is, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered [Peter says, Shall be saved]." This is one of the many passages that causes me to make the statement that I think the greatest time of salvation is yet in the future. I believe God will save more of the human race than will be lost. I agree with Spurgeon who said that he believed God would win more to Himself than would be lost. When Christ comes to the earth to establish His Kingdom, there is going to be the greatest time of individuals turning to God that the world has ever seen. Also during the Tribulation period there will be a great turning to the Lord -- much greater than there has been during the church age. The resurrection of Jesus Christ whom God has made both Lord and Christ is the whole point of Peter's sermon. He is not emphasizing the phenomenon they had witnessed. The important issue is coming to know Jesus Christ. Oh, my friend, don't be so occupied with having an experience that you miss coming to know Christ. What place does He occupy in your thinking, in your life, in your ministry?

This section of Joel's prophecy is all-important, but it is yet to be fulfilled.

Chapter 3

THEME: Looking at the Day of the Lord (postlude)

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem [[Joel 3:1](#)].

"For, behold, in those days." What day? The Day of Pentecost? No, for He says, "when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem." He did not bring them back at Pentecost; in fact, the Lord Jesus reversed the order when He said, ". . . ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" ([Acts 1:8](#)). Instead of bringing the captivity back to Jerusalem, Christ, as head of the church, said to those who now have been born again and are in the body of believers, "Go to the ends of the earth. Take the message out that I am raised from the dead. Tell them that God is gracious and longsuffering and merciful, and that whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

The gospel seems so simple that a lot of smart people miss it today. How wonderful it is! All you do is believe. I want to say that I do not believe in a works salvation -- that is obvious -- but I do believe in a salvation that works. That is important to see. If you have been saved, you'll want to get the gospel out. If you don't want to, my friend, I'd question your faith -- not your works, but your faith -- because faith works.

I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land [[Joel 3:2](#)].

"I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat" -- that is there at Jerusalem.

"And will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." Before the Lord Jesus comes again to the earth, believers will already have appeared before His judgment seat to see whether or not they are to receive a reward. When He comes to the earth, then He will judge to see who will enter the Kingdom. We have this marvelous prophecy here, but it is not found only in the Book of Joel. Joel is the first of the writing prophets, but all of the prophets mentioned it. One of the last prophets, Zechariah, said the same thing, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee" ([Zech. 2:10-11](#)). This is the same thing Joel told the people at the beginning. This was their great hope, their bright hope, that the Lord will come to establish His Kingdom on the earth and the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh.

And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot; and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink [[Joel 3:3](#)].

This is an awful thing that Joel describes here. I get a little provoked sometimes with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals which has come up with some unusual demands as to how we should treat animals. They are opposed to the foxhunt, although the fox generally gets away and they don't really need to worry about him at all; they also are opposed to all types of hunting and shooting of game. However, they haven't been down to the stockyards yet to stop the slaughter of cattle, because most of them like their porterhouse and sirloin steaks as well as their prime rib roast. But that is really not my point, because I agree that animals should not be mistreated and that they often suffer because of man's sin. The greatest cruelty today, however, is cruelty toward children. It is one of the most appalling things that is happening in our day. I read sometime ago of a mother who had co-habited with some no good, ne'er-do-well man who beat her little boy. A precious little boy -- what a beautiful child he was at the beginning. But they also showed a picture of him near the end; he'd been beaten and mistreated and finally killed by that man! Actually, there was not much protest over that. The mistreatment of a dog has caused more furor in our communities than did the mistreatment of that child. Such cruelty toward children is one of the signs of the end of an age.

Why are so many children running away from home in this day? I think any parent who has a runaway child needs to get down on his knees before God and ask Him what he has done wrong. Someone will say, "Well, the child got in with the wrong crowd. We need the help of a psychologist." My friend, we don't need that -- we need to read the Word of God. God says the evil day will come when "they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot." How many fathers today are setting the right example for their sons? "And sold a girl for wine, that they might drink." How many girls are being plunged into immorality because of liquor in their homes? One young girl, who had become a harlot and was arrested, was asked where she took her first drink. She said that it had been with her mother. God have mercy on a mother who would do a thing like that! Someone needs to speak out today in this so-called suave and sophisticated age that wants to think we are advancing in civilization. My friend, we are going down the tubes so fast it's making us dizzy.

Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head [[Joel 3:4](#)].

God says that they have gone past the time and are unable to turn to Him sincerely.

Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things:

The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border [[Joel 3:5-6](#)].

Even at this time the children of Israel were being sold into slavery, yet this was before Rome had come to power.

Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head:

And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it [[Joel 3:7-8](#)].

God's judgment of Tyre and Sidon, prophesied also by Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, has all been literally fulfilled.

Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:

Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong [[Joel 3:9-10](#)].

"Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears." Someone will say, "I thought the Bible said to beat your swords into plowshares." It does say that, but the time to do that is when the Kingdom is established on the earth (see [Isa. 2:4](#); [Mic. 4:3](#)). When Christ is ruling you can get rid of your sword, but until then you'd better keep your ammunition dry and you'd better be prepared. I do not agree that we should get rid of guns today. I think we need to protect our homes, our loved ones, and our nation. You

and I are living in a big, bad world in which there are a lot of wild animals loose -- they are human beings and they are two-legged, but they're mean and ferocious and they will destroy you. Also there are nations which are like that. In fact, that is the way God describes nations; He calls one a lion, another a bear, another a panther, and another a nondescript beast. Believe me, my friend, the nations of the world are like wild beasts, and we need to keep a few atomic bombs in our arsenal. Paul said, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them . . ." ([1Thess. 5:3](#)). I am afraid we are going to have our teeth jarred out one of these days by the falling of a bomb, and we won't be able to retaliate because we have had too many soft-hearted and soft-headed leaders. The United Nations has as its motto the verse in Isaiah which says to beat your swords into plowshares; I think they ought to have this verse from Joel: "Beat your plowshares into swords." We need to be prepared today -- we live in a bad, bad world.

Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.

Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about [[Joel 3:11-12](#)].

In the Olivet Discourse the Lord Jesus said that He will judge the nations and that He will judge them according to the way they have treated His people. Someone will ask, "Are they peculiar? Are they better?" No. Why, then, will He judge in this way? Because the 144,000 Jewish witnesses are going to be the only witnesses upon this earth after the church is removed. The Lord said that if anyone gave a cup of cold water in His name to one of these witnesses He would reward him. Many people think that that excuses them for giving only a dime or a quarter in the offering plate. However, may I say to you, in that day it would cost you your life to give a cup of cold water to one of the 144,000 who will be witnessing for Christ throughout the world.

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great [[Joel 3:13](#)].

When he speaks of a "harvest," he is speaking of the end of the age.

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision [[Joel 3:14](#)].

Joel identifies this period as "the day of the LORD." All that Joel says falls within the parentheses of the Day of the Lord which begins after the Rapture of the church with the Great Tribulation and continues through the second coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom and the judgment as to who will enter the Kingdom. Then Christ will reign for one thousand years; there will be a brief period of rebellion when Satan is let loose, then the final judgment at the Great White Throne, and eternity will begin. All of that is included in the Day of the Lord.

Again Joel speaks of the disturbance in the heavenly bodies --

The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more [[Joel 3:15-17](#)].

Jerusalem is still being trodden down by Gentiles. The Garden Tomb was so crowded with tourists the last time we were there that we could not get into it. It was not Jews who were there, but it was Gentiles from all over the world -- tourists coming and going all the time. The day is coming when the Garden Tomb will not be the tourist attraction in Jerusalem. Someday the Lord Himself will be there!

Now we move into the time of the Kingdom --

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim [[Joel 3:18](#)].

"And it shall come to pass in that day" -- that is, the Day of the Lord. "The mountains shall drop down new wine" -- this is in the time of the Kingdom. "And the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters." Israel is short of water today, but they will not be short in that day.

"And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim." This is interesting because the valley of Shittim is on the other side of the Jordan River. How could these waters flow from Jerusalem across the Jordan? Zechariah tells us that the mountain will be split in that day. Instead of the great rift running from north of Byblos in Lebanon, down through the Sea of Galilee, through the Jordan valley, through the Dead Sea and into Africa, it is going to run the opposite direction -- it is going to run east and west.

Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land [[Joel 3:19](#)].

God will judge Egypt and Edom even into the millennial Kingdom. They have always been enemies of the nation Israel.

But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion [[Joel 3:20-21](#)].

"For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed" -- the Lord has not yet moved in their behalf. "For the LORD dwelleth in Zion" -- He doesn't dwell there today. Jerusalem is as pagan and heathen as any city on topside of the earth, but the day is coming when the Lord will dwell there. Then we will see all these things fulfilled. We would need to see Christ Himself there to say that these things are being fulfilled today. But that is not where we see Him, for at this very moment He is at God's right hand. It is my prayer that we might be continually conscious of Him and have the reality of His presence in our lives.

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(Recommended for Further Study)

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